



House of Representatives

STACEY Y. ABRAMS
MINORITY LEADER
REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 84
POST OFFICE BOX 5750
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 31107
(404) 378-9434 (H)
E-MAIL: stacey.abrams@gmail.com

COVERDELL LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 408
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334
(404) 656-5058
(404) 656-0114 (FAX)

STANDING
COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
ETHICS
JUDICIARY NON-CIVIL
RULES
WAYS AND MEANS

April 20, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-109; WC Docket 11-42**

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write today to commend the efforts of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and Lifeline and Link Up. We believe the Lifeline program provides an invaluable service to low-income constituents in our districts and across the country. We are pleased the Board has decided to look for ways to minimize fraud, waste and abuse in the program so that deserving and qualified families will still have access to this important program.

As our nation struggles to overcome unemployment and other economic challenges, the Lifeline program is more invaluable than ever. Reports both academic and anecdotal have shown that access to phone service leads to greater chances of employment. Residents in our districts and nationwide, should be able to access these services in the case of an emergency.

We wholeheartedly agree with the Board's recommendations that the Commission put together a plan for uniformity on areas that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) that would help eliminate waste and abuse in this program. In doing so, however, we want to make sure that low-income support of the fund remains strong. Our concern is that this beneficial program remains accessible and free to those who qualify.

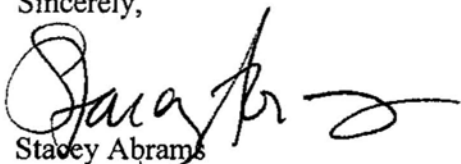
Low-income support is cyclical and this should be acknowledged. As you may be aware, unemployment has grown by 6% in my state since 2008 and those eligible for SNAP assistance has also grown significantly. In these challenging economic times, programs such as Lifeline have a real and tangible impact on the lives of our constituents and we would like the Commission to recognize this, as we believe they do. As this recession begins to recede, the numbers of those eligible for Lifeline should also drop accordingly.

Chairman Julius Genachowski
April 20, 2011
Page 2

Collectively, we urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations from the Federal-State Joint Board, as we would like to see these programs be sustainable in the short and long-term. Our only concern is that the Commission should not adopt policies that cap funding for low-income support or hinder competition in an already underserved market. For example, the FCC should not mandate (even minimal) monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would present an undue administrative burden on both carriers and consumers. The best approach to curtailing fraud and abuse is establishment of an eligibility database.

Thank you for your service to our constituents. We hope that the FCC will take strong action to ensure that Lifeline services remain available to the individuals who need them most.

Sincerely,


Stacey Abrams

Debbie Buckner

Brian W. Thayer

Carolyn F. Hughes

Margaret Hance

Nikki J. Randle

Karla A. Wheeler

Stephanie S. Benfield

Carol H. Jallator

Dann Baker

Ernest G. Smith

Keith G. Hand



Kathy B. Ash

Pat Gardner

Dan Wilkerson

Stacey Dwyer

Wm. J. 

Karl A. Wheeler

Ed Dills

Symone Bell

Paula Dickerson

Christopher

W. J. 

Sam Van Epps

Rep. Stacey Abrams
District 84

Rep. Debbie Buckner
District 130

Rep. Brian W. Thomas
District 100

Rep. Carolyn F. Hugley
District 133

Rep. Margaret D. Kaiser
District 59

Rep. Nikki T. Randall
District 138

Rep. Karla L. Drenner
District 86

Rep. Stephanie S. Benfield
District 85

Rep. Carol H. Fullerton
District 151

Rep. Glenn Baker
District 78

Rep. Earnest G. Smith
District 122

Rep. Keith G. Heard
District 114

Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver
District 83

Rep. Kathy B. Ashe
District 56

Rep. Pat Gardner
District 57

Rep. David Wilkerson
District 33

Rep. Stacey Evans
District 40

Rep. Winfred J. Dukes
District 150

Rep. Karla L. Drenner
District 86

Rep. Elly Dobbs
District 53

Rep. Simone Bell
District 58

Rep. Pamela Dickerson
District 95

Rep. Elena Parent
District 81

Rep. Jasmine Neal
District 75

Rep. Carl Von Epps
District 128

Members of the Georgia House Democratic Caucus